THE

EPISTLE

FROM THE

YEARLY MEETING,

HELD IN

LONDON,

By ADJOURNMENTS, from the 21ſt to the 29th of the Fifth Month, 1798, incluſive;

To the *QUARTERLY* and *MONTHLY MEETINGS* of *FRIENDS* in *GREAT BRITAIN*, *IRELAND*, and elſewhere.

DEAR FRIENDS,

AMONG other advantages which we find in thus aſſembling ourſelves before the Lord, it is none of the leaſt, that our love for the members of his myſtical body, the church, receives from time to time a renewal of holy fervour; with ardent deſire that ſhe may increaſe in qualification to be preſented to him a glorious church, not having ſpot, or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing. May we, Friends, as a part thereof, through the grace which is given to us, be willing to cleanſe ourſelves from every pollution of fleſh and ſpirit, and to become holy in all manner of converſation.

We have no new doctrines to communicate. Happy, yea, bleſſed ſhould we be, could every man find a teſtimony in his conſcience, that he acted conſiſtently with thoſe he hath already received: but ſtill it remains our concern to ſtir up the pure mind in each other, and to preſs the obſervance of thoſe things which appear to be neglected. And how ſhall we find any ſubject of greater moment, whereon to renew the often repeated call to vigilance, than that leading duty of public worſhip, and of ſeeking the recruits of ſtrength, and of confidence to perſevere in the way of peace, which the mind may experience in the humble performance of this ſolemn obligation? None of the negligent can ſay he has no need of the ſupport; yet too many ſeem, by their conduct, to indicate that they think ſo. But, Friends, review the ſubject; let not an evil habit prevail; but ſuffer yourſelves to be weaned from it. Make the eſſay of a better practice, and you will find, to your comfort, that difficulties will often ſink as you approach.

Every

Every ſtep which we gain in the way of obedience to duty, is not only of advantage to ourſelves, but it gives additional ſtrength and animation to be beneficial to others. By this means alone can the parent, the guardian, or the maſter, hope to diſcharge his important and awful truſt to the lambs committed to his care, in the wilderneſs of this world. And what need there is of ſeeking all means of qualification to be helpful to them, the dangers of that wilderneſs, and the failure of many who are entruſted with the charge, too obviouſly declare. We fear that, in many inſtances, an early and frequent peruſal of the Scriptures of Truth, and opportunities of quiet retirement in families, before the Lord, are neglected; whilſt amuſements not ſuited to the condition of a candidate for immortality, and writings inimical to the ſimplicity of the Goſpel, are indulged, or connived at. We fear alſo, that ſome of our Youth are training in habits of expenſe in attire, furniture, and attendance, which, growing into cuſtom, are not only inconſiſtent with the ſimplicity of the goſpel, but a conſtant call for much of that property, which would be better employed in feeding the hungry; and of that time, which might be occupied in viſiting and cheering the habitations of human miſery. 'The trimming of 'the vain world,' ſaid our worthy elder William Penn, 'would 'clothe the naked one.' It is not however with ſuch only that we plead, on behalf of the indigent. We wiſh thoſe who are generally conſiſtent in appearance and manners with our ſelf-denying profeſſion, to be clear that a due proportion of their time and ſubſtance is ſpent in the relief of diſtreſs. This is a day when thouſands of our fellow creatures are wanting the neceſſaries of the body; and thouſands imbibing with avidity principles injurious to the mind. Happy will it be, on a parting retroſpect, to believe that we have neither contributed, by miſapplication of our entruſted property, to the one; nor omitted to do all in our power to prevent the baneful ſpread of the other. Chriſt is all; in Him are all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge; and the obſervance of his law, written on the heart, would reſtore perfect harmony to the univerſe.

We have at this meeting received, as uſual, accounts of the ſufferings of our members. The whole amount in Great Britain, is upwards of £10,300. chiefly for tithes and thoſe called church-rates; but including about £2000. for military purpoſes. The amount of thoſe reported from Ireland is £785. The Friend impriſoned laſt year at York, on account of the militia, was releaſed at the expiration of his term; and the remaining priſoners, on account of tithes, by a ſpecial clauſe for that purpoſe in an act of parliament, by virtue of which diſtraints were made on their effects. Three other Friends were, near the end of laſt year, committed to Huntingdon gaol, by Exchequer proceſs, on account of tithes, and afterwards for a ſhort time to the Fleet priſon; but were releaſed on the iſſuing of a writ of ſequeſtration.

We have received Epiſtles from the Yearly Meetings of Virginia, of Maryland, of Pennſylvania, of New York, and of New England. Among other concerns of Friends on the Continent, that for the violated rights of our fellow-men of the African race ſtill continues. Our Meeting for Sufferings here, alſo, lately preſented, in the name of the Society, a third petition to the Houſe of Commons, on the ſubject of the Britiſh traffic in the perſons of men. Its failure of ſucceſs is well known; but we ſee no reaſon to be diſcouraged from again becoming public advocates of the Africans, when a ſenſe of duty ſhall open the way.

We deſire afreſh to preſs upon all our members, the neceſſity of a peaceful and innocent demeanour amongſt men; and eſpecially let all be careful not to ſeek or accept profit by any concern in the preparations ſo extenſively making for war: for how reproachfully inconſiſtent would it be to refuſe an active compliance with warlike meaſures; and, at the ſame time, not to heſitate to enrich ourſelves by the commerce and other circumſtances dependent on war.

Finally, dear Friends, let us bear in conſtant remembrance that important principle of our profeſſion, a teſtimony to the pure and free miniſtry of the goſpel of Chriſt; whoſe ſole prerogative it is, to ſend and qualify ſuch as it pleaſes him, without reſpect to worldly rank, or human acquirements; and all his truly devoted ſervants, whatever may be their gifts and ſtations in the church, are brethren; and hold them under him the only head, and the univerſal, and all-ſufficient teacher.

We ſalute you in goſpel love, and remain your affectionate friends and brethren.

Signed in and on behalf of the Meeting, by

JOSEPH BIRKBECK,

Clerk to the Meeting this Year.

Yearly Epiſtle.

1798.